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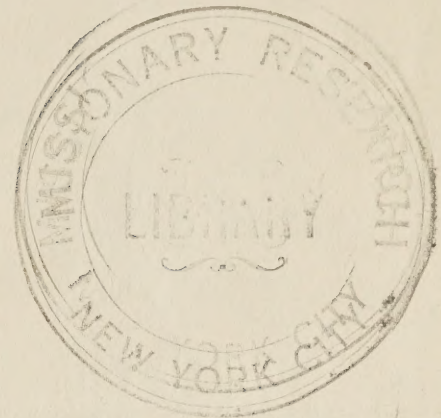
Foreign Missions Conference of N.A.
419 Fourth Avenue, New York, N.Y.
Leslie B. Moss, Secretary.

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MISSION BOARDS PLAN
NEW FIELDS OF COOPERATION

By William W. Reid



Two important steps, looking toward new and closer cooperation between American foreign mission boards, featured the sessions of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, held at Briarcliff Manor, New York, Dec. 19-22. While the actions were not announced as connected with the recommendations of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry, there was a general feeling on the part of the leaders that these steps will prove at least a beginning toward realizing some of the ideals of the laymen regarding closer cooperation, elimination of duplication of effort, and a partial pooling of board resources in America.

First, the Conference voted to call very soon a "general conference" of mission boards in the United States and Canada wishing to send delegates for the consideration of setting up "cooperative activities". No specific definition of "cooperative activities" was given, but it was indicated that these might include suggestions for federation of churches or institutions overseas, new agreements regarding territorial divisions, cooperative approach to the colleges for missionary candidates, cooperation at home in presenting the cause of missions to churches and communities. A committee was named, with Dr. P.H.J. Lerrigo as temporary chairman, to propose an agenda for this general conference, the agenda to go to the boards for study and modification before the conference meets.

It was pointed out that the calling of this general conference is a widening of the invitation extended by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the six other boards associated in the Laymen's Inquiry, for the appointment of a joint committee to study means of further cooperation. The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. has already appointed its Committee to meet with the Methodist Committee, and other boards are expected to take similar action. The Foreign Missions Conference proposal invites every mission body in the United States and Canada to similarly plan cooperative efforts.

Second, the Conference accepted the recommendation of one of its committees for such a revision of the activities of the Conference and of its Committee of Reference and Council - the continuing agency - as will enable it virtually to "draft" a few executives of the constituent boards for specific tasks. As the Conference undertakes certain united efforts - such as a united program of home cultivation, approach to the colleges for candidates, or a study of the rural or medical situation - it will be

empowered to ask a board for the temporary release of an executive, particularly qualified for this task, for a given period of time. In other words, the Conference will engage in certain promotional projects but will not engage a staff for this purpose; the staff will be loaned for the common task by the constituent bodies.

It was announced that plans are already under way in the Home Base Committee of the Conference for a united program of church and community cultivation beginning in the spring of 1933. The personnel and leadership of this program will be drawn from a number of boards.

The Laymen's Inquiry Report

Officially the report of the Appraisal Commission of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry was not before the Conference - it has been presented to only seven of the denominations represented. Actually the report and its suggestions and recommendations were before the Conference in every discussion - and in almost every speech made from the floor. The committee planning the Conference program had suggested that this Report and other reports be considered only as "background for the discussions". But an insistent demand for a statement on the Report as such was made, and resulted in the adoption, not quite unanimously, of this resolution.

"The Foreign Missions Conference of North America recognizes gratefully the earnest and unselfish services of the Appraisal Commission of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry and its constructive proposals. We are at the same time solicitous with reference to unfavorable reactions throughout the church to the press releases given out in advance of the appearance of the Report, and also to a number of points in the Report itself.

"We recommend that in the measures adopted by the Boards for fostering the study of the Report special attention be given to clearing up misunderstandings and to removing wrong impressions, and that we seek to take to heart and profit by the timely and forward-looking recommendations of the Report.

"The Conference, in the light of the present most critical world situation, and of the inspiring challenge of the Herrnhut Meeting, as well as of the recognition on the part of the Appraisal Commission of the need of adequate aims and message for the missionary enterprise, wish to reaffirm the Message of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, and the findings of the meetings of the Council at Oxford and Herrnhut, dealing with the basis and central emphasis of the world mission in which we are united with the older and younger churches throughout the world."

The most recent of these three statements of the aims of the missionary enterprise is that of the Council meeting in Herrnhut, Germany:

"We are convinced that our missionary task is to proclaim in word and life God's revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ. If we have anything to bring in the name of God to a world in need, it is certainly not our own piety, our own way of life, our own modes of thought or our own human help. What the Church has to give in its world mission is the good news of a Divine act in history, of the Word made flesh. Apart from this there is no Christian mission.

In face of the powerful anti-Christian forces operating in the world today we reaffirm our faith that the revelation of God in Christ is the only way of deliverance for mankind, and that it alone can provide the foundation for an order of society that will be according to the will of God."

The Missionary Personnel

The matter of the missionary personnel - the enlistment of candidates, the training of missionaries, the development of missionaries on the field and while in service, the criteria for selecting those to be withdrawn from service when that becomes necessary - loomed large before the Conference. The criticisms and recommendations of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry regarding personnel was uppermost in many minds.

Dr. Oscar M. Buck, of Drew University, made a plea that the mission boards make it possible, as they do not now, for the development and expansion of the missionary's personality. He protested that "withdrawal is not the answer, but renewal is" in the case of missionaries who because of undue burdens of administration and of details are not growing.

"The missionaries need to have their lives constantly renewed," he said. "We cannot win Asia to Christ as Europe was won. Asia demands of the religious man knowledge and increasing knowledge. The religious man must have leisure for contact with folk. Personality can be developed only through such knowledge and such contacts. Instead of this leisure for development, we are giving our missionaries too much routine and too much detail to do."

Dr. Frank J. Rawlinson, of China, suggested that the missionary's first period of service, three or five years, should be a probationary period to see if he is suited to the work, and life appointment should be made only if qualified as a result of this testing period. Dr. Frank W. Bible said that he "finds the missionary growing in personality at least as well as men in any ordinary walk of life in America are doing. We will have abler missionaries when administrative and other details are turned over to national workers."

In connection with the discussion of personnel the following resolution was introduced and passed - the Conference, however, disclaiming that it resulted from the criticisms of missionaries in the Laymen's Inquiry Report:

"The Foreign Missions Conference of North America rejoices in its connection with the notable group of Christian missionaries in all lands who by life and teaching are bringing Christ and His saving power to the knowledge of men who have not known Him. The members of the Conference realize that the raising of standards of preparation and equipment, together with the maintaining of a growing spiritual life, meets the joyous welcome of the present missionary force. We set our faces toward the future with all its calls to advance and new ministries in glad loyalty to those who now bear the burden and heat of the day in the missionary enterprise. We trust the missionaries to be sent out in the coming years will master the new conditions that may arise and that they may render in their day a service as valiant and understanding as has been rendered by those who have gone before them or who will welcome them to their fields of labor."

Present Cooperation

An impressive report of "the many achievements along cooperative lines which have proven successful" was presented by Secretary Leslie B. Moss. He enumerated these enterprises:

The International Missionary Council and its constituent bodies,
the national Christian councils of 24 countries.

1258 educational institutions, including universities and colleges,
theological schools, medical and nurses training schools, normal
industrial, middle, high, and elementary schools, and kindergartens.

40 hospitals.

National union churches in mission lands, as:-

Kumiai Church in Japan
Presbyterian Church in Japan
Anglican Church in Japan
Methodist Church in Japan
Presbyterian Church in Korea
Methodist Church in Korea
Church of Christ in China
Lutheran Church in China
Evangelical Church of the Philippine Islands
North India United Church
The Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church
South India United Church
Methodist Church in Mexico
Presbyterian Church in Brazil
Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa
Church of Basutoland
The Church of Central Africa (Presbyterian)
The Malagasy Protestant church

The Anglo-American churches in mission lands

United missions: Mesopotamia
Santo Domingo

Associated Boards of China Colleges

An interesting study of the practice of various boards in promoting self-support and in using missionary money for the support of national churches and national pastors, was led by Dr. Ralph E. Diffendorfer of the Methodist Episcopal Church. While a great variance in practice was discovered - some boards supporting local churches for many years, some demanding self-support from the beginning - two things seemed to emerge: that mission funds must be used as sparingly as possible for paying national pastor's salaries; and that care must be taken to equitably differentiate in the demands for self-support made upon the poor, as the outcastes in India, and upon those in more favorable circumstances, as the urban Christians of Japan or the Philippines. Perhaps the greatest revelation was the fact that throughout Asia there are thousands of self-supporting churches, schools, and hospitals.

Dr. William I. Chamberlain, of the Reformed Church, was elected chairman of the Foreign Missions Conference for 1933; and Dr. Cleland B. McAfee of the Presbyterian church, chairman of the Committee of Reference and Counsel.